

patience and pin feathers

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/34553587) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/34553587>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Gen
Fandoms:	Origins SMP , Dream SMP , Minecraft (Video Game) , Video Blogging RPF
Relationships:	Wilbur Soot & TommyInnit & Phil Watson , TommyInnit & Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF) , Wilbur Soot & Phil Watson , Tommyinnit & Tubbo , TommyInnit & Ranboo
Characters:	Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF) , Philza Minecraft - Character , TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Toby Smith Tubbo , Wilbur Soot , Charlie Slimecicle , scott smajor , Floris Fundy , Ranboo (Video Blogging RPF) , Sneegsnag , Jack Manifold , Niki Nihachu , all origins characters
Additional Tags:	Hybrid TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Winged TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Elytrian Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF) , Adoptive Parent Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF) , Hybrid Wilbur Soot , Older Sibling Wilbur Soot , Bee Hybrid Toby Smith Tubbo , Alternate Universe - Origins Mod SMP Setting (Video Blogging RPF) , Flying , Hurt/Comfort , Fluff , Angst , Family Fluff , Found Family , clingyduo , allium duo , angel duo , Crimeboys - Freeform
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of the patience au
Collections:	Found family to make me feel something , trail of blockmen fics (really good ones) , Angsty/Fluffy MCYT works , Dream SMP Fics (Mainly Tommy (Yeah I'm That Bitch)) , Things , Pawsitively Awesome Dream SMP Books , wow i really am reading mc fanfiction 😍😍, Non-Human MCYT
Stats:	Published: 2021-10-17 Completed: 2021-11-14 Words: 10,261 Chapters: 5/5

patience and pin feathers

by [youreyeslookliketheocean](#)

Summary

“Crow father?”

Phil rolled over on his bed with a sigh. The clock on his wall was almost too dark to make out. Tangerine colored sunlight, warm and glowing, had just barely cracked the surface of the misty horizon outside his balcony window. “Yes?”

“You have to promise not to be mad.”

Those were not exactly the words Phil wanted to be hearing out of his youngest’s, Tommy’s, mouth at seven thirty in the morning.

Chapter 1

“the key to everything is patience. you get the chicken by hatching the egg, not by smashing it.”

- Arnold H. Glasow

“Crow father?”

Phil rolled over on his bed with a sigh. The clock on his wall was almost too dark to make out. Tangerine colored sunlight, warm and glowing, had just barely cracked the surface of the misty horizon outside his balcony window. “Yes?”

“You have to promise not to be mad.”

Those were not exactly the words Phil wanted to be hearing out of his youngest’s, Tommy’s, mouth at seven thirty in the morning. He sat up, glancing towards his bedroom door, which was still shut tight. He could hear Tommy shifting back and forth on the other side, his little feet making the wooden floorboards outside creak.

“Come inside,” Phil sighed.

The door hinges squeaked as Tommy, Phil’s six-year-old son, cracked open the door and stepped inside. He had his head down and hands behind his back, as if he were ashamed, and that would have been a bad enough sign on its own except that, Phil knew, Tommy *never* acted ashamed. Not even when he had good reason to. Not even when he captured a baby chicken and hid it in a box inside the Pube for a week. Not even when he got into fist fights with the neighbor kid, Ranboo, and had to be dragged home kicking and screaming. Not even when he drank one of Phil’s speed potions two months ago, and had to be rushed to a village healer because he was *far* too young to be drinking that shit.

Tommy was, quite frankly, too much of a little shit to be embarrassed by his actions. So the fact that he was acting shy now, his chin still tipped to his chest and his arms pulled tight behind his back, like he was a prisoner—or about to become one—immediately set warning bells off in Phil’s head.

“Fuck,” he muttered, pulling his sheets aside and sliding off the bed. His slippers were there on the floor, and he automatically slid them on. “What happened?”

“You have to promise!”

“Tommy—”

“Promise!”

Phil sighed. He walked over to Tommy and crouched down, getting on eye-level with the tiny boy. He was still in pajamas—little, red and white striped ones that were still just a tad too baggy around his arms and ankles. His wings, still snowy-white and downy, twitched anxiously where they poked out from behind his back. They were just barely visible.

Tommy’s wings were significantly smaller than most other avian hybrids’, even at this age. It was something Phil had been meaning to talk to the village doctor about, but hadn’t yet. He didn’t want to ask with Tommy in the room. Or maybe he was just afraid of what the answer would be.

“I will *try* not to get mad,” Phil said. It wasn’t quite what his son wanted, but he wasn’t going to lie to him, and warning bells were still ringing in his head. “But you have to tell me first. Tommy, look at me...”

Phil raised a hand to find Tommy’s chin underneath the mop of curly, golden blond hair obscuring his face. He brushed his jawbone gently, and tilted Tommy’s face up. As he did, the sun finally crested the balcony railing and warm, honey-colored light brightened on his son’s face.

Phil gasped. On Tommy’s forehead, just above his right eye, a bruise the size of Philza’s fist blemished Tommy’s face with dark lavender and ugly green. Smeared blood had crusted around his nose—not a lot, but enough to be concerning—and Tommy’s eyes were both red-rimmed and teary. Upon making eye-contact with Phil, Tommy’s face crumpled, and he brought his hands out from behind his back.

“I wanted to try flying again,” he hiccuped, and Phil stared in horror as Tommy opened his palms, revealing two fist-fulls of pure white feathers. “Even though you told me not to, that I wasn’t ready, I thought... I thought I was.” He was rambling now, tiny voice stuttering as he fought back tears. “S-So I went up to the perch, and I jumped off, but I didn’t fly I just fell. And then my feathers really hurt, ‘cause I crushed some of them when I fell, so I tried to preen them like you taught me, but they kept coming out and I think I broke them and—” Tommy cut himself off with a whimper, tears bubbling up, and Phil hurried to pull him into his arms.

Feathers scattered the floor around them as Tommy dropped them all, choosing to cling to his father instead. He buried his face into Phil’s chest, letting out a tiny, heartbroken sob, and Phil’s heart lurched.

“Tommy,” he crooned, pulling his boy closer, “you didn’t break them. Feathers come out easier when you’re stressed, and after taking a fall like that, you probably just preened them a bit too hard.”

Tommy shuddered in his arms. Phil continued, “It’s okay, it’s okay. How does your head feel, though? That bruise looks terrible.”

He didn’t say what he was really worried about, which was whether or not Tommy had gotten a concussion from the fall. Instead, he forced Tommy to look up at him again, watching his

eyes to make sure they focused. Thankfully, they did. Tommy stared up at him with wide, sky-blue eyes, tears still rolling down his cheeks.

“It hurts a little,” he said, sniffling.

Admitting to it hurting even a little was quite a lot coming from Tommy, so Phil scooped him up, ignoring the six-year-old’s confused look as he toed open the door and headed down to the kitchen.

The Pub had been Phil’s home for the past six years—ever since he’d found Tommy’s egg out in the forest. It stood on top of a floating island, water spilling out from the rocks and giving others besides Phil, who could fly, a way up and down before Phil installed the rope ladder. He’d built the entire place himself—the shiny wooden floors, the overhead beams that held up the second story, the bar area with the swiveling chairs that Tommy loved to spin around on during breakfast. There was green moss dripping down from the ceiling, spotted with pale pink flowers that smelled just a tad sweeter than vanilla. Warm lamplight spilled from the single lamp above, left on all night to keep the mobs away from the windows, and there was the perch—the wooden overhang that jutted out from the wall—that Tommy had jumped off of that morning. All the flower pots that normally lined the top had been moved.

Phil hopped off the last few rungs of the ladder, carefully carrying Tommy over to the bar and setting him down on the counter. He left to get some water from the sink, filling up a small cup with it and grabbing a hand towel. When he returned, the six-year-old avian was kicking his feet back and forth off the side of the counter, still sniffling, but the tears had dried on his cheeks.

Phil smiled at him softly, dipping the hand towel into the cup of water and then bringing it up to Tommy’s face. Carefully, he began to wipe the blood away from his nose.

“I know you want to fly,” Phil said slowly. This was a sore subject for Tommy, and he knew it. “But don’t you think there are better ways to practice than flinging yourself off of whatever high structure you can find? I took you to the meadow yesterday and you did great!”

“But I didn’t fly,” Tommy whined, kicking his feet against the back of the counter. Phil brought a hand down to still them; Wilbur was still asleep.

“Your wings aren’t ready for flying yet,” Phil replied. “You’re still little.”

“Am not!”

Phil exhaled a chuckle, finishing off Tommy’s nose with one last dab. He flipped the towel to a new corner and dunked it in the water again, then brought it to the bruise on Tommy’s forehead. There were little bits of dirt from the floor there, and he gently cleaned them away as he spoke.

“Okay, you’re not little then. But you need pin feathers to fly, and you don’t have any of those yet.”

“Why not?”

Phil hummed. “I don’t know, Tommy. I guess they just need a little more time.”

Tommy didn’t respond. He started kicking his legs again, and this time Phil let him. The boy was filled with restless energy, and he knew how it felt. It was common, especially with avians, to want to fly from a young age. They called it the “Call From Heaven,” or “Call From the Sky”: a yearning to be in the air. Phil had dealt with it when he was younger, though he only knew because of stories his mother used to tell him, back when she was still alive. She’d told him he tried jumping off of everything: trees, hills, tiny cliffs out over the pond; and more dangerously: second-story windows, the fifteen-foot loft he’d used to sleep in, and the roof.

“Dad.”

Phil blinked, pulling himself out of his memories and back to the present, where his six-year-old boy was looking down at his knees and fiddling his fingers in his lap. He set the hand towel and cup of water down, giving him his full attention.

“Yes?”

“How much longer do I have to wait?”

Phil sighed. He reached out, taking Tommy into his arms and balancing him on his hip as he walked to the balcony. It wasn’t really a balcony, just a grassy area outside the house with an overhang that overlooked the meadow below. Phil had placed potions of protection around the open walls to repel mobs, but, if Tommy kept leaping off of things like he’d been, he was going to have to think about putting in a lockable door.

He sat down on the grass with Tommy in his lap, and pointed out at the sun peeking over the mountains to the east.

“You see the sunrise?” Phil asked quietly.

Tommy nodded, golden hair softly brushing Phil’s chin. He smiled.

“The sun sets every night, but every morning, without fail, it rises again,” Phil continued. Tommy’s wings were pressed flat to his chest; he could feel how small they were. They shouldn’t have been so small. They should have spanned at least to Tommy’s elbows by now, but the fluffiest feathers only just barely reached his shoulders. Phil needed to ask the doctor about this. He should have asked the doctor about this months ago. He didn’t. He couldn’t. If he got the answer he was dreading, he wouldn’t know how to explain to his son that no matter how desperately the sky called him, he wouldn’t be able to answer.

“It’s bright,” Tommy said.

Phil reached down and bopped his nose. “Just like you!”

Tommy giggled, and Phil let the weary, bone-deep sadness and premature grief slip away. Maybe it was nothing. Maybe Tommy was just taking a little longer than other avians to

fledge. Maybe Phil was just jumping to conclusions too quickly, like Tommy off the side of the perch, and paining himself over nothing.

“Just like that sunrise,” Phil said, “your wings will come. It might take a little while, but be patient, and soon you’ll be able to fly just like me. Alright?”

Tommy nodded again. His fingers had started absently playing with Phil’s sleeve, tugging it to wrap around and around his pudgy knuckles. Phil smoothed his son’s hair back with a small smile as the sun rose in front of them.

Patience. It would just take a little patience.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

- 5 Years Later -

“Wil! You fuckin’ bitch!”

“Tomathy Innit!”

“Give! It! Back! PHIIILLL!”

Phil slammed his hammer down so hard that the crafting table beneath it shook. This was the fifth time today. The fifth time someone or something had interrupted his work, and although he was *trying* to be patient, *trying* to hold his tongue and let the boys figure it out on their own, there was only so much screaming he could take before he snapped.

“Alright, what is it this time?” Phil asked, stomping out onto the half-built porch. Unsanded boards creaked beneath his feet.

The tiny, shack-like house was supposed to be Wilbur’s. He’d come to Phil and asked him to make it a few days ago, after one too many incidents of nearly phasing through the Pube’s floor and falling fifty feet to the ground below. He’d said the little house would just be until he could get a better handle on his abilities, which, as a fifteen-year-old, were still developing. But Phil secretly thought Wilbur just wanted some space to breathe.

Over the past few years, the Pube had grown from a small house of three—Phil, Wilbur, and Tommy—to a boarding house of nine. There was Tommy and Wilbur and Phil, but then there was also Jack, whom Tommy had rescued from the Nether, and Sneeg, who Wilbur had brought home one night in the palm of his hand, squealing about “—*how cute he is! Look how tiny! I found him drowning in the river!*”.

Then there was Scott, a starborne, who Phil had befriended while out flying one day. He’d become such a frequent visitor of their house that Phil figured *why not just give him a room?*

There was Charlie, a slime-hybrid, who Tommy occasionally forced to act as his personal trampoline. And there was Tubbo, Tommy’s bee-hybrid best friend, who’d accidentally stung him out in the forest one day and felt so bad about it that he brought twenty buckets of fresh honey to Phil’s doorstep that same afternoon. He and Tommy made honey popsicles out of some of it. They’d been best friends ever since.

Finally, there was Fundy, a fox-hybrid who Wilbur had coaxed into joining the family. Fundy had his own little foxhole somewhere, Phil was sure of it, but whenever he chanced to stop by the Pube there was always an extra bed waiting for him. Wilbur liked him because they

could both go invisible and, in doing so, could perform endless pranks on the other members of the house. Tommy liked him because he could pet him.

Fundy did not like Tommy.

But that was okay, because somehow they still got along. *Everyone* in the Pube got along—minus a few squabbles here and there. Squabbles like the one Tommy and Wilbur were currently engaging in.

“Wilbur took my glass!” Tommy yelled, stomping his foot down in the wispy, summer-green grass.

Phil sighed and glanced around for his eldest adoptive son. Wilbur was nowhere to be seen, but that meant practically nothing considering he was part phantom.

“Wil,” Phil called, warningly, “turn visible right now or I’m not finishing your house.”

It only took two seconds for him to listen. Wilbur’s bright yellow sweater materialized in the field, no more than six feet away from where Tommy stood fuming. The rest of him trickled into semi-transparent visibility while he spoke.

“Dad, Tommy’s being a brat.”

“Am not!”

“He’s acting like a child.”

“No I’m not! *You’re* the child! You’re the one stealing other people’s things!”

“I didn’t take your spyglass! This one’s mine!”

“Oh and now you’re fucking *lying too!*”

“Tommy,” Phil said, treading down the porch steps and into the grass, “what did we say about swearing?”

“I’m eleven. I can do what I want. ...Bitch.”

Phil rolled his eyes, but it was with a fond smile that he joined his two kids in the meadow beneath the Pube. Wilbur hesitantly slunk closer, appearing at Phil’s side as he reached out to take Tommy’s shoulder. Tommy, despite his attitude, melted into the touch.

“Look,” Phil said to both of them, “I was trying to let you two figure it out on your own, but it seems like that’s just not going to work this time. Wilbur—”

Wilbur’s shoulders sank as he anticipated what was coming.

“—give your brother his spyglass back. And Tommy, the next time one of your things is stolen, can you come *talk* to me about it instead of screaming?”

Tommy shifted back and forth between his two feet, staring down at the grass. If anything, he'd only become more stubborn over the past few years. But, finally, he shrugged. "Fine," he muttered.

Phil smiled. "Awesome." He watched Wilbur draw the offending glass out of his pocket and hand it over. Then, before any more fights could break out, he pointed his eldest back to the rickety wood house and asked if he'd help him finish the tinted glass roofs. Even if Wilbur did nothing but lounge about inside the tiny cottage, at least he'd be kept apart from Tommy for a little while.

Wilbur agreed, but just as Phil turned to walk back up the porch steps, Tommy grabbed his wrist.

"Wait!" he shouted. "What about my flying lesson?"

Phil froze. He'd forgotten.

For the past five years, ever since the day Tommy jumped off the perch and nearly gave himself a concussion, Phil had taken him out to this little flight-training course he'd designed up on Big Hill. In reality, it was just a bunch of logs Phil had distanced apart for Tommy to jump to. But to Tommy, every log landed on was a step towards flying. *For real* flying. The type of flying that Phil was almost positive, now, his son would never truly experience.

Tommy's wings still hadn't grown. Over the past five years, they'd stretched but a measly inch from the size they were when he was six, and Phil had long given up the idea of asking a doctor. He didn't need to ask; he already knew. Tommy's wings were too small to fly. Tommy's wings would probably *always* be too small to fly. And there was nothing wrong with that, except for the fact that Tommy *wanted* to fly, and Tommy still thought his wings would grow big enough one day, and Tommy was going to be so, incredibly crushed when Phil eventually told him it wasn't going to work. He wasn't going to fly.

Catching Tommy's desperate, sky blue eyes, Phil sighed.

He could tell him now. He could see Tommy's wings, pale white, almost glowing in the afternoon sun. The tips of snowy feathers poked up just above his shoulders, when they should have trailed close to the ground by now. They were *so* small. They were too small. Phil knew that Wilbur had noticed it, too. It was only a matter of time before one of them spilled, and Phil would prefer it came from him and not the other sulking teenager in their house. He should tell him now.

Instead, Phil reached out to run a hand through Tommy's curls. "Maybe later, okay?" he said, giving him his most placating smile. "Let me finish the outside of Wil's house, and then we can go."

Tommy frowned. "But that's gonna take all day!"

Phil chuckled, pulling his hand back and walking up the porch steps. "Patience, Little Bird. Patience."

Chapter End Notes

hello! short chapter, but this fic is pretty short as it is. I wrote it all as a single-chapter fic, but then decided to divvy it out because it would have been a bit of a long scroll. haha.

If you haven't noticed, I took some liberties with Wilbur and Tommy's powers. Tommy does not actually fall slower, for one (because he's essentially supposed to be a baby elytrian), and Wilbur can shift to be semi-opaque in the sun and won't burn. That out of the way, thank you for all the kind responses to the first chapter!!

If you want to chat, come hang out on tumblr [@youreyeslookliketheocean](https://youreyeslookliketheocean.tumblr.com)!! Also, as always, comments and kudos are always appreciated!

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Another short one... oopsies.

TW: emetophobia (!!!)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

- 2 Years Later -

Phil woke up late one night to the sound of retching. He stumbled out of bed, pulling on a robe as he slipped through the hall, down the ladder, and into the living area of the Pube. Silver moonlight shone in from the balcony, coating the glossy wooden floor with a sheen of milky light. Phil had never closed the balcony off with a door like he'd thought he'd have to seven years ago. His son had mellowed out after that experience with the perch, making barriers for potential nose-dives off the Pube unnecessary.

Speaking of his son, Tommy was crouched at the edge of the balcony's grass. His slouched back was to Phil, wings hanging dead and limp as he leaned over the side of the Pube, sniveling. Phil couldn't see his face, but he saw when Tommy lifted a hand to wipe at it, and heard when his sniffle was interrupted by another gag.

Quietly, Phil walked across the grass.

"Hi, mate," he said, kneeling down in the grass beside Tommy. He reached out and swept his fingers through the thirteen-year-old's hair, pulling it back just in time for Tommy to lose another part of his dinner off the side of the Pube. Phil grimaced. "D'you eat something bad?"

Tommy rocked back on his knees, gulping in the midnight air. When he'd gotten enough in, he spoke hoarsely and in bullet-pointed sentences. "Went to Tubbo's and he forgot I can't eat meat... Made a whole dinner of it... Didn't want to disappoint him... Plus, Ranboo was there... Would'a said I'm a bitch..."

Phil snorted. "Ranboo wouldn't do that."

Tommy shot him an unimpressed glare, but with his face pale and tinged green, eyes red and watering, it didn't really have its intended effect.

"Yeah okay," Phil sighed, sweeping a stray lock of golden hair back behind Tommy's ear, "you're right. He probably would have. But since when do you care what Ranboo thinks? Or Tubbo, for that matter."

Tommy sniffled again, and reached up a hand to wipe his nose. He stubbornly did not make eye contact with Phil.

“You should have reminded them that you can’t eat that stuff,” Phil continued, softer. “They would have understood.”

Slowly, Tommy shook his head. “It’s not about them *understanding*,” he mumbled.

Phil frowned. “What is it about, then?”

“It’s just...” Tommy went silent, and for a moment, Phil feared he was going to vomit off the side of the island again. Then he started up again, quieter, just loud enough to be heard over the sound of chirping crickets. “I already inconvenience everyone enough because I can’t do anything. I can’t help mine like Wilbur, because I don’t have x-ray vision. I can’t run errands in five seconds like Ranboo can with his teleporting. I can’t start fires in a snap like Jack, or fucking *explode* like Scott. I... I can’t even *fly*.”

Tommy lifted a palm to swipe at his nose again. He looked up at Phil, and it was like Phil was looking at him at six years old again—teary blue eyes staring up at him under a dark purple bruise, fistfuls of feathers clutched between tiny fingers. The bruise and the feathers were gone, but the eyes were still the same.

“I can’t even fly, Dad,” Tommy repeated. “What kind of fucking bird hybrid am I if I can’t fly?”

Tommy was not six anymore. His limbs were long and awkward—he’d gotten clumsier because of them, but only a little bit. He’d started to take interest in things like building his own stuff, mining his own supplies. He liked sewing and gardening, listening to music, and, well, he’d also made it very clear that he now liked girls.

The point was, Tommy wasn’t little anymore. He was growing up, already thirteen. But that didn’t stop Phil from wrapping him up in his arms like he used to, pulling him in, and resting his chin on the top of his head as if he were still small. As if he were still able to fit perfectly in Phil’s lap.

“I’m sorry,” he whispered into his son’s hair. “I know it’s hard.”

“Am I *ever* going to be able to?” Tommy asked, and his voice sounded so uncharacteristically small. He was normally the loudest in the house, voice ringing through the hall upstairs and shouting over the conversations at dinner time, screaming at Wilbur, yelling for Tubbo, laughing hysterically at something that wasn’t even that funny. It was weird to hear him sound so tiny.

The admission Phil had been meaning to say—the “*I’m sorry, I just don’t think...*”, “*I’m sorry, they’re just so small...*”, “*I’m sorry, I don’t know what went wrong...*”—all dried up in his mouth. Instead, what wound up coming out was a quiet, tired, “I don’t know, Tommy. We’ll have to wait and see.”

Chapter End Notes

hello! ungodly early update today (for me, at least) because my uni opened registration for spring semester at 'who-in-the-world-is-awake-right-now' a.m.

I hope you enjoyed this, albeit brief, chapter. I promise it'll get better soon. I mean... worse first... but better. Lol.

//

Thanks for reading, and comments/kudos are always appreciated!! <3 also, come chat with me on [tumblr](#)! I post a lot about fic updates and other assorted writing/dsmp things on there.

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

- 3 Years Later -

The cliffs near the Pube truly were incredible during the autumn season. Brown pine needles blown from the spruce forest miles off dusted the ground, and leaves of every warm color—gold, auburn, vivid crimson and mulberry—crunched under Phil's feet as he followed Tommy towards the ledge. His son was sixteen now, and taller than Phil by a full head. Still, his feet kicked up leaves as jovially as a child as they walked along, sending the colors flying in the wind.

“Come on, Crow Father!” he teased, spinning around. His wings spread wider, white feathers just barely brushing his forearms. “Let’s make a pile to jump in!”

“Right next to the edge of a cliff? No thanks,” Phil chuckled.

“Why not? You’ve got wings. And besides, I’ve been practicing.”

“*Dying?*”

Tommy scoffed. He wheeled back around, kicking up another arc of leaves as he did. “Don’t be so pessimistic! What, scared your brittle old man bones will break if you fall? Look! I can see my house from here!”

Tommy leaned off the edge, squinting at the base of the mountain, where Phil knew his son’s little Hidey-Hole Cave was carved into the stone. It was a small house, with two fat chests Tommy had luggered all the way from the Pube, and a tiny furnace that would just barely keep the space heated during winter. Tommy had moved out there over the summer, following in Wilbur’s footsteps by having a house outside the Pube. It was partially for Tommy’s own benefit, and partially for the benefit of Tommy’s... sons.

The two little chickens Tommy had brought home to the Pube one day weren’t *really* Tommy’s sons, but he insisted on calling them such. He’d found them in the valley, and something—Phil secretly suspected bird instincts—refused to let him part with them. So he’d adopted them, and now they lived outside his home in a little coop he’d built himself. One, the fluffier, white one, was named Hetta. The other hadn’t been officially named, but was commonly referred to as Unnamed One. Wilbur liked to point out that there was an obvious favorite in the family. Tommy liked to point out that Wilbur should mind his own beeswax, or he’d tell Ranboo he saw him stealing from his house the other day.

That usually ended the teasing pretty quickly.

“I got the wood.”

Phil turned as Wilbur himself levitated out of the ground behind him, an armload of chopped oak wood held in his arms.

“Great,” Phil replied, gratefully reaching out to take a couple logs off the top. “I can help you carry these back, and Tommy—”

Phil would never really know how it happened. Wilbur didn’t even know, and he hadn’t been the one with his back turned. Maybe it was the wind. Maybe it was a crumbling bit of the edge of the mountain. Maybe it was that Call of the Sky, tugging a bit too hard and teetering him over the edge. Whatever the reason, Phil’s explanation was cut short by the sound of his youngest yelping, and then screaming, and when he turned it was just in time to see Tommy’s terrified face as he pitched over the edge of the cliff.

“*Dad!*”

All the wood fell from Phil’s hands.

They say that, when you die, your life flashes before your eyes. The best parts, the worst parts, your favorite birthday cake and the time you laid in bed at night thinking it was all over. The warmest hug you ever received, your first taste of stinging rejection, the honeyed words of a compliment you never forgot, and the taste of wasp venom rolling off your own tongue. You regretted those words later. Moonlit nights and fresh-dewed mornings. Crisp autumn leaves and salty ocean air. Phil would argue that parts of it can flash before your eyes before then. Parts of his flashed before him right as he saw Tommy fall off that cliff.

Tommy at six, knocking on his bedroom door late at night. The sun had barely risen, and Tommy sat in his lap when it did.

Tommy at eleven, sparring Wilbur with wooden swords in the meadow and getting upset over a stolen spyglass. Flying lessons up on this very hill, actually, with stacked logs and exhilarated whooping.

Tommy at thirteen, coming home from a friend’s house sick to his stomach because he didn’t want to disappoint anyone any more than he felt like he already had. Sitting on the ledge of the Pube and listening to his son who had grown so big sound so small.

Phil leapt off the ledge easily. He pushed his arms back and held his wings in, aiming himself towards Tommy’s flailing body like a bullet.

“Hold on!” he said. “I’m coming!”

When he got close enough, his wings popped open and he swept down, just beneath Tommy, and grabbed him. He wrapped both arms around him and pulled him to his chest. Then, in one graceful swoop, he flipped around and stretched his wings as far as they could go.

They missed the ground by a mere foot.

Phil glided them into the meadow, where they skid to a stop amidst tall, swaying grasses and all the dandelions Tubbo had planted with the intention to eat.

“Oh prime,” Phil breathed, catching his breath. “Are you okay? What happened? Did the ledge break? Is anything hurt? I’m so sorry, I didn’t realize—” Phil reached out to grab Tommy’s arms, to bring him closer to look at him, make sure he was okay, but Tommy smacked them away. He kept his head down to the grass, blond curls obscuring his face just like when he was six and didn’t want Phil to see his bruise.

Those same warning bells immediately rung in Phil’s head. He reached forward again, desperate, but Tommy scooted further away before he could touch him.

“Don’t!” he said, and the word came out so harsh and jagged, like a blade of sharp glass, that Phil listened. “Don’t... Phil. Dad. I—” Tommy looked up, finally, and it was only then Phil realized how hard his son was working to hold back tears. “Why can’t I fly? I didn’t even float! I just... I just fell!”

“Tommy—”

“I opened my wings and did everything you taught me! I should have at least been able to glide! I don’t understand—”

“Tommy—”

“I’ve been practicing so hard. What I said on the hill wasn’t a lie, I have been! I completed the course six times yesterday, easily! I can do it! I thought I could... I thought I could do it.”

Phil knelt in silence, letting the grass whip at his legs and wondering if a sinkhole was going to open up right underneath him. It certainly felt like one was opening in his chest.

This was it, he realized, as the autumn wind sent leaves spinning through the meadow around them. He couldn’t wait any longer.

“Your wings... Tommy, your wings are too small for flight,” Phil said. But this was something Tommy had already known; he had to keep going. “You’ve grown a couple pin feathers, but not enough to actually fly, or really even glide. It’s... I’ve been talking to one of the village healers.”

That was when Tommy’s face crumpled. Disappointment, hurt, anger, and grief all flashed across his face in a millisecond, and the sinkhole in Phil’s chest widened further.

“I asked him about your wings, and described them to him, and told him how old you are and — Tommy I asked him everything. I asked him if there was *any* chance you would fly.”

Tommy had gone dead silent, sitting criss-cross in the grass with his wings tucked behind him, totally frozen. When Phil paused, he whispered in a voice even tinier than the one he’d used on the balcony when he was thirteen, “What did he say?”

This was it.

Slowly, heart breaking, Phil shook his head. “No,” he whispered just as quietly as Tommy had. “He said... he said no.”

Phil had expected tears. He'd expected confusion, and hurt, and grief from the sixteen year old avian in front of him who'd only ever wanted to touch the sky. He hadn't expected Tommy to yank up a fistful of grass as he pushed himself hurriedly to his feet, blue eyes suddenly burning with rage.

"No," Tommy said, fists clenching around the grass he'd pulled. "No, that healer's a fucking idiot. I'm going to fly. My wings may be small as shit but they're still wings. And I have some pin feathers already, you said so yourself. I don't give a fuck what the doctors say; *I'm flying.*"

"Tommy, I know this is hard—"

"Shut up!"

The grass dropped from Tommy's hands as he brought them both to his ears, and the wind carried the blades away like little green streamers. Phil's eyes never left his son.

"You... you told me to be patient," Tommy finally whispered, hands still over his ears, eyes squeezed shut.

"I know. I'm sorry."

"How long have you known?"

"With certainty? A month."

"And without?"

"...Since you were six."

Tommy's hands moved from his ears to clutch his sweatshirt—the white one with puffy, bright red sleeves Wilbur had gotten him at a nearby village. They'd had to cut holes in the back for his wings to fit through, but with Wilbur's careful eye and Tommy's skill with sewing, it was an easy fix. Plus, Tommy's wings didn't need the biggest gaps. They were quite small, after all.

"And you never told me?"

I tried, Phil thought to himself, eyes welling up with tears long overdue. I tried to tell you, but every time I got close I thought—what if I'm wrong? I didn't want you to grieve for something that wasn't dead.

"I'm sorry," Phil repeated.

Quietly, Tommy shook his head. "Fuck this," he whispered, turning his back on Phil and starting to trudge through the grass towards his own home. "I'm going home."

"You can stay at the Pube for the night, if you want," Phil called after him, voice cracking. He knew what his son was like. Isolating himself was almost never a good solution for dealing with his problems, and this was a big one. At least if he came to the Pube there'd be

other people there to keep him company; it wouldn't be as cold and quiet as his little mountainside alcove.

But Tommy shook his head. "No," he said, not glancing back as he continued to walk away. "I'll be fine. I'll stay away from the cliffs so I won't fall off again 'n shit. Just... just leave me alone."

Phil opened his mouth to respond. Tommy had misunderstood. He wasn't asking him to come home because he was worried about him not being able to protect himself; he was asking because he didn't want him to be alone if he was upset. But before he could begin explaining, a cold hand fell on his shoulder.

Phil turned his head, and there was Wilbur, translucent and floating behind him.

"Let him go," Wil said. "Give him some space for a little while. Some time. You've had ten years to accept this. He's had five minutes."

Phil knew he was right. He knew he needed to give Tommy some time, some space to make sense of his own feelings. But by prime, Phil was *so tired* of being patient.

- 2 Weeks Later -

It was two long weeks before Phil heard the knocking on his bedroom door again.

He rolled over, squinting at the clock on his wall, but it was too dark to see. Crickets chirped outside, and through the balcony window he could see stars glittering in the midnight blue sky. It was quiet, peaceful, and this was the first good sleep he'd had in days. Ever since Tommy fell off that cliff and then stormed away from him in the field. Guilt had been eating at him, chewing through his chest like the gnats he kept having to chase out of the Pube. It was getting colder, and they liked the warmth.

"Yeah?" Phil asked groggily, sitting up and turning to his bedroom door.

He expected someone from the house to pop their head in. Maybe Fundy informing him of a runny tap, or Scott coming back from a midnight walk. Instead, it was Tommy who slipped inside, wings folded behind his back and head bowed the same way it had been when he was six.

A rush of *déjà-vu* hit Phil, but more than that, surprise, and joy, and confusion, and a whole mix of heart-stabbing emotions at seeing his son in his room after all those days of staying away.

"Tommy?" Phil asked quietly. He swung his legs over the side of the bed, but didn't get up. "What are you doing here? What time is it?"

A loud sniff echoed throughout the room, and Tommy finally looked up. "One A.M.," he said, and his voice was more cracked and broken than Phil had ever heard it before.

Instantly, he knew what he needed to do. Phil scooted over on the bed and extended his arms out to his son. "Come here, little bird," he said.

That was all it took. Tommy launched himself across the floor to Phil, sobbing as Phil wrapped his arms around him and pulled him onto the bed.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry," Tommy muttered over and over again into his shoulder. Phil could feel the hot tears leaking through his pajama shirt already, but he didn't care. He could never care. Not when his baby was finally back. Not when he was *apologizing* as if he'd been the one to do something wrong. Why was he apologizing?

"No, *I'm* sorry," Phil said, "I should have told you sooner. They're your wings, and you had every right to know."

Tommy only cried harder, pushing his face into Phil's sleeve. Phil stroked the back of his hair, slowly rocking back and forth while the crickets chirped and the rest of the world slept on.

"I missed you," Tommy hiccuped.

Phil's eyes brimmed with tears. He pressed his lips to the top of Tommy's head. "I missed you too. I'm so sorry, Tommy."

"It's okay."

For a while, for a long while, they rocked back and forth on the bed. Tommy cried until he couldn't cry anymore, and then he sat, a boneless and sniffling heap in his father's arms, as Phil hummed to him. It was a quiet song, a bird song he used to sing to him in the first few months after he'd hatched. It was soft enough that he could let the melody reverberate through his chest instead of actually singing it, and, if Tommy's slow shift to lay against Phil's chest was any indication, he liked it.

Eventually Phil stopped humming, readjusting so he and Tommy could both lay down on his bed. Tommy curled into his side, already half-asleep, and Phil smiled.

"I love you," he whispered. "I really am sorry for not telling you about your wings."

"Mm. You' sure I'm not gon' fly?" Tommy mumbled, eyes closed.

"The doctor was sure."

"But *you*."

Phil sighed. He reached out, delicately tucking a stray strand of blond hair back behind Tommy's ear. In the moonlight, it looked almost silver.

"I don't know, Tommy. I don't think so, but you've still got a couple years left to grow... I think..." He swallowed, surprised by the sudden wave of tears that sprung to his eyes. He'd known for years that something was wrong with Tommy's wings. He shouldn't have been the one crying; that grief didn't belong to him. Yet, as he finished speaking, a single tear slid

down his cheek and plopped onto the sheets between them. “I think I’m having a hard time accepting this too. And it’s stupid, and selfish, but I just... I wanted you to be happy.”

“I am happy.”

Tommy mumbled it so quietly, Phil almost missed it.

He laughed, a choking, teary laugh, and swiped another tear from his own cheek. Outside, the crickets had gone silent.

“Yeah? Even if... Even if you won’t be able to fly?”

For a second, no answer came, and Phil thought Tommy had fallen asleep. But then the boy slowly nodded his head.

“M happy now,” he slurred. “And I had lotta time t’ think about it. I think I’ll... I’ll be okay.” A yawn punctuated his words, and Phil smiled.

“Of course you will. And you know that everyone loves you no matter what, right? You’re not inconveniencing anyone, and you’re perfect. You’ve always been perfect.”

He wouldn’t have said all that had the night’s conversation not reminded him of the one three years ago, outside on the Pube’s balcony when Tommy had been sick and Phil had been mother-henning over him. He remembered Tommy’s pale, tear streaked face then, as he’d told Phil all his insecurities, and it looked a lot like the one Tommy had been wearing when he walked in.

Tommy sighed, long and deep, on the brink of sleep. One corner of his mouth quirked up. “I love you Dad,” he breathed.

It wasn’t quite an answer, but Phil would take it. He’d take as much of it as he could get, because this was his baby, and he loved him more than air, more than flying, and even the Call From the Sky could never get him to leave him. If Tommy was stuck on the ground for the rest of his life, then for prime’s sake, so was Phil.

“I love you too,” Phil whispered.

Tommy’s breathing had already steadied out. He was asleep.

Chapter End Notes

hello! so, Phil finally told him. what do we think? is he gonna fly??@@

//

comments and kudos are always appreciated! also, follow me on [tumblr](#)! I talk a lot more about fic updates and writing stuff there.

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Quick reminder that avian's are baby elytrians in this universe. I think that's sorta canon to the OSMP? Like, maybe it was Wilbur who said it at some point in a stream? But.. yeah. They're just younger elytrians.

ANYWAYS ENJOY THIS LAST CHAPTER!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

- 1 Year Later -

Tommy was seventeen, and he was flying.

“*Tubbo!*” Tommy screamed, gripping the handlebars of their invention so hard his knuckles turned white. “Tubbo turn fucking left or we’re going to hit the Pube!”

Tubbo, splayed out on the glider beside him, shifted his handle to the left. A loud pop echoed in the open air as the flaps on the glider’s wings tilted, and then the whole *glider* tilted, veering left just in time to avoid smacking into the base of the Pube’s floating island.

“Prime, we almost lost a wing back there!” Tommy yelled over the sound of rushing wind and the glider’s engine. The redstone-wired engine was strapped to the bottom of the main deck, right underneath where Tommy and Tubbo were laid out on their stomachs, each clutching one half of the controls. The wings—cream colored panels attached to the deck with wooden poles—arched above them and caught the wind.

“Shut up! I’m trying to land!” Tubbo yelled back.

Tommy pulled his attention away from the receding Pube just in time to see his wheat field coming up below them. “Not in *my fucking crops!*”

“I know I know! We’ll land in that field there! Press down!”

“Alright on 3... 2... 1... Now!”

They both pressed their handles down simultaneously, and the glider’s wings clicked into place as they tilted down towards the ground. The peach colored horizon vanished behind Snow Mountain as they drifted downwards, gliding for real, like Phil always did.

Tommy stretched his free arm out the side of the glider. The wind ripped at his hoodie, cresting ripples through the fabric like waves and letting him feel the weight of the cool air pushing against his arm. He stretched his fingers out until they couldn’t extend any further, and *whooped*.

Tubbo laughed. The wind whipped. The engine coughed, and then started to rattle.

Tommy froze.

That wasn't supposed to happen.

"Oh fuck," Tubbo muttered. "Not again."

The engine's rattling shifted into low keening, the sound of death-approaching, and Tommy threw himself into action. He pulled his handle up a tad, matching Tubbo's, so that the wings tilted upwards and slowed their descent at least a little bit. He pressed the button on the center console for the landing pads—three plastic bubbles on the bottom of the plank that filled with air and slime when ejected. Charlie had helped them construct that part. Then he adjusted his goggles over his face, and prayed to Prime they didn't crash into anything important.

They wound up crashing into Snow Mountain, arguably a better landing spot than, say, Wilbur's house barely twenty feet away. They stumbled out of the wreckage, faces pale but eyes gleaming, and Tommy gave another loud whoop off the side of the hill. He threw his fists up in the air and spun giddily, the same bursting adrenaline he always got after a good fly racing through his veins.

He spotted Phil down in the meadow, near the base of the Pube, and waved to him. "PHIL! DID YOU SEE THAT!"

Phil was too far away for Tommy to hear what he said in response, but he saw the man laugh and wave back, and that was enough praise for Tommy. He grinned, stumbling down the snowy slope after Tubbo and tugging off his goggles.

"That was *poggers!*!" Tommy exclaimed, wings flapping furiously behind his back as he skittered down the side of the mountain. They'd been itchy all morning, but the air ruffling under his feathers while flying had felt incredible. He'd suspected that all he'd needed to cure them was a good flight. "I think that was the best run yet! We should get the pulleys and try again. Gonna have to dig that bitch out of the snow, though. The nose is probably stuck."

Tubbo laughed as they reached the bottom of the hill. Snow flaked off both of their boots as they traipsed through the grass, past Wilbur's house, and towards the Pube. "Hell fucking no, dude. We've already been up, like, five times today. I need a break."

"Aw c'mon!" Tommy skipped to get in front of Tubbo. "It's so *fun* though! And I'm sure I know what's wrong with the engine now. We can fix it and go again!"

"Dude, you're addicted to flight."

"Better than addicted to drugs."

"Those too."

"Hey!"

Tubbo giggled, and Tommy laughed with him, falling back into step beside his best friend as they neared the Pub. The island's giant shadow loomed over them, stretched long and thin in the setting sun. The land beneath it was swallowed up by its darkness, but everywhere else was golden—glowing tangerine and butterscotch as the sun dipped low.

“I’ll have you know I’ve only tried drugs once,” Tommy continued, “and it was at *your* house.”

“*My* house? When the fuck did you have drugs in my house?”

“You served me meat, remember? Made me woozy as shit for days. Meat-hangover.”

Tubbo rolled his eyes. “That’s not drugs. And how many times do I have to tell you I’m sorry? I’d just finished helping Ranboo move shit around his house that day. I wasn’t thinking.”

“I know, I know,” Tommy said, nudging Tubbo’s shoulder with a grin. “I’m just teasing. It was my fault anyway. I should have reminded you.”

“Yeah, you should’ve.” Tubbo nudged back.

“Ah, silly me. Always causing my own problems.”

“And mine. Do you still have Oswald in your house?”

Tommy hesitated. “... No?”

Oswald was Tubbo- *Tommy*’s pet axolotl. He’d found him while digging in a mine one day. Had him spontaneously dropped on him, really. A full bucket of water had come crashing down over his head, axolotl in tow, and who was Tommy to just *leave* the tiny, helpless creature at the bottom of a dirty mine when its appearance was so obviously a miracle, predestined by fate to occur right when Tommy was beneath him. It didn’t matter that Tubbo was missing his axolotl, also named Oswald, at the same time. It didn’t matter that Wilbur’s sweater was wet in the center, as if he’d spilled water on himself while lugging a bucket around—he’d probably just been hanging out with Niki. But Tubbo was convinced that *Tommy*’s Oswald was *his*, and he’d been trying to steal him back for the past several days now.

“You *do* have him,” Tubbo said, bouncing on his feet a little as they neared the river. Bubbling water cascaded over the side of a rock, dribbling into the river and rushing downstream towards Niki’s base. “Liar, liar. You’re so bad at lying; your wings puff up every time.”

Tommy scowled and reached back to touch the tips of his wings. “No, they’re just *incredibly* fuckin’ itchy today. I don’t know what’s up with them. It’s like a million mosquitos decided to eat my wings during the night.”

“They’re itchy?” asked a new voice.

Tommy pulled his hands away from the backs of his wings, where he'd started to subconsciously scratch at the feathers. The two boys had gotten close enough to speak with Phil, who was hunched over in the grass beneath the Pube's ladder, ripping weeds from the flowerbed he'd planted all around it.

"Ooh! Flowers!" Tubbo exclaimed, immediately floating up and over to the array of poppies, petunias, and lilacs all scattered across the ground.

Tommy ignored him and his bee instincts. "Yeah, they're itchy," he said, answering Phil, "but they've been like this before. It's not a big deal."

Phil hummed, pushing himself up from the garden. "Maybe they need to be preened. When's the last time you fixed them?"

When *was* the last time Tommy preened? He shifted his wings against his back, thinking, but his few seconds of hesitation must have answered Phil's question all by themselves because, before Tommy could remember that he'd preened them a week ago in his room, Phil reached out and guided Tommy to the Pube's ladder.

"Up. I'll fix them up there, and get you two some dinner, too."

Tommy had lived long enough with Phil to know not to argue with him when he went all "Mother Hen"—as he and Wilbur liked to call it. So he tucked his wings back behind himself and started climbing.

The Pube really hadn't changed much from when Tommy was younger. Sure, it was full of people now, but there were still the balcony and the bar, the lamps hanging from the ceiling, and the chests stacked up precariously in the other room. There was the perch with all the same flower pots still resting on it, and there was the rickety old ladder that led upstairs. Some of the newer additions had been added for the benefit of the other people living in the house. The Nether portal for Jack, the fish tank for Niki, and all the little nooks and crannies for Sneeg to tuck himself away inside. Besides that, though, it was the same exact house Tommy had lived in since he was six. Still warm. Still cozy. Still home.

Phil gestured to the bar, and Tommy took a seat on one of the wooden stools.

"Where is everyone?" he asked.

The Pube was unusually empty. Usually, these days, Tommy would show up to a plethora of greetings from Jack, from Niki, from Scott and Charlie and Fundy. But today the house was strangely quiet.

"Well, Fundy wanted to go out fishing, so I think a couple people went with him. They're going to bring some back to freeze for dinner tomorrow. Then Wilbur was going mining with Jack, and Charlie went to Sneeg's house—"

"Oh no. Did someone slap him?" Tommy laughed, thinking of the way Charlie shrank like a slime every time he was hit.

Phil chuckled. His fingers carded through Tommy's feathers, gently and carefully searching out the bent or broken ones. "I think so. I didn't actually see him leave, though."

"Cause he's so tiny. Gotta be careful not to step on him, 'cause when he goes all small and shit it's like stepping on—"

Phil cut him off with a gasp. Tommy immediately tensed, pulling his wings back in and turning around.

"What?" he asked, glancing around at the floor, which was already littered with about twenty broken feathers Phil had plucked out. "What's wrong?"

Phil was staring at his back as if it'd just grown a third wing, hands clutched over his mouth and eyes blown wide.

"Turn back around," he spoke through his hands. "Oh Prime, *Tommy*."

"*What?*"

Okay. This was getting concerning now. Tommy tried to twist his neck backwards to get a look over his shoulder, but Phil's hands were back on his wings again, and it was hard to look with him constantly readjusting them.

"What is it?" he asked instead, desperately. "What happened? I didn't fuck them up in the flying machine, did I? Phil? Phil, I'm going to start pissing and shitting and laying eggs *so* violently if you don't tell me right fuckin' now what's going on. *Phil?*"

Phil's fingers slid gently down his wings until they reached the tips. It was a calming gesture, one all bird-hybrids knew. "Relax," he said, and Tommy's shoulders instinctively sank. "It's okay. It's nothing bad, it's just..."

"Just what?"

Phil gently tugged at the tips of Tommy's wings until they did what he was telling them to: straightening out until they were completely extended. Phil's fingers carded through the feathers again, and Tommy suppressed a satisfied chirp as the motion soothed the itch he'd been dealing with all day.

"Tommy," Phil said, and his voice was quiet but Tommy could still hear the smile in it.
"Tommy, you've got pin feathers."

"*wHAT?*"

Tommy grabbed the edge of one of his own wings, yanking it around his shoulder and turning his head to try and see the backside. Phil was laughing, almost hysterically, behind him. Tommy stumbled out of the stool, nearly knocking it to the floor. He chased the back of his wing like a dog, spinning dizzily in a circle, trying to get a closer look.

"You're shitting me, you're messing with me, there's *no way*—"

Phil laughed, and a warm hand stopped Tommy from spinning into the bar's edge. Tommy's eyes met teary, bright blue, crinkled ones, and he let out a pitiful chirp.

"They're not all the way in yet," Phil said, words bubbling from his mouth as quickly as the waterfall outside, "but they're coming. That's why they're so itchy. Tommy, they're gorgeous. All red and gold and sparkly—"

Phil's hands on his shoulders were a grounding weight. Without them, Tommy swore he would have started floating right then and there.

"They're really there?"

"They're really there."

"I... I can fly with those, right?"

Phil laughed. "Yes, you can fly with those."

Tommy sucked in an inhale. His eyes were beginning to sting, and Phil's face was growing blurry in front of him. "Now? I can fly right now?"

If it was at all possible, Phil laughed harder. "No! Not now! They're not even in all the way yet! But, if you keep your wings preened, and are patient, soon."

"Soon?"

"Soon."

"And my wings aren't... too small?"

"Well..."

That wasn't quite what Tommy wanted to hear. He sobered instantly, eyes clearing as he waited for Phil to finish his analysis.

"They might be a little small, but if you're getting pin feathers now that means there's still a chance for them to grow a bit further. And, even if they don't, the fact that you're getting this many pin feathers at all means they're getting ready for flight. They wouldn't do that if they couldn't carry you."

For a moment, Tommy just stood there, staring at his father as he rambled on about wing spans and pin feathers, the difference between avian and elytrian wings, and how Tommy would need to preen them more often to get rid of all the old down feathers coming out. It was all valuable advice, he was sure, but all he could focus on in that moment was the fact that finally, after seventeen years, he was going to fly. And the fact that it really didn't feel all that different than it had when Tubbo had come to him, three months earlier, dragging a giant piece of plywood behind him and asking if he wanted to build a flying machine.

Tommy had already learned to fly all on his own. This was just going to be a new way.

Still, he couldn't stop the tears that filled his eyes. He rushed forward, slamming into Phil and burying his face into his shoulder the same way he had when he was six, when he was thirteen, and the same way he knew he'd do it even when he was thirty. He let the sobs bubble up out of him, and let Phil run a hand up and down his back as he listened whispers of "It's okay," and "I'm so happy for you."

"I'm going to fly?" he asked again, just to make sure.

"You're going to fly," Phil replied.

When Tubbo entered the Pube five minutes later—clutching a handful of flowers to his chest for an after-dinner snack—it was to find a red-nosed Tommy sitting on top of the bar, sniffling. Despite the poor state of his nose (And eyes. Had he been crying?), Tommy was beaming, and as his feet swung back and forth, knocking repetitively against the wooden counter, Tubbo got the feeling he'd missed something important.

"Tubso!" Tommy greeted, incredibly cheerful for someone who looked like they'd been hit by a bus full of seasonal allergies. "What do you think about taking the flying machine out for a race in, say, two months?"

Tubbo snorted. What the fuck had happened in the five minutes he'd been gone? "Two months? That's awfully specific," he said, warily eyeing the watery-eyed avian sitting across the room from him.

"Yes, okay. But two months and I could race you."

All the flowers dropped from Tubbo's hands.

When Wil returned from the caves later that night, he was the first person after Phil and Tubbo to know. He wrapped his arms—fully tangible during the night hours—around his younger brother in congratulations, and smiled when Tommy giddily squeezed him back.

Two months later, Phil stretched his arms out in demonstration and watched his son do the same. The wind whipped at their hair and clothes, bitingly cold now that winter was approaching, but Tommy didn't seem to mind. His nose and cheeks were rosy pink, but the

smile on his face had never been brighter, so Phil wasn't sure how much of the hue was really from the cold.

They swooped low to the ground, and Tommy ran his hand along the top of his wheat crop as they passed it. It would all be dying soon, the air too cold to preserve the fragile plant. But when springtime came again, with patience, Phil knew it would pop back up again.

Tommy laughed, and Phil looked over to see him flying with his eyes closed, face tilted to the sun rising overhead.

"How does it feel?" Phil yelled over the wind.

Tommy spread his wings wider, stretching the newly grown pin feathers until they shone crimson and gold in the early morning's rose-colored light.

"Like I've been waiting my whole fucking life for this," Tommy called back.

In that moment, Phil was struck—not with what he'd thought he would be: with amusement or joy for the moment—but with the memory of Tommy before he'd even hatched. He'd been a tiny egg, found abandoned in the forest, and Phil had sat diligently with him for months before he hatched.

He'd come late, and Phil had been worried he'd never come at all. He'd paced back and forth in the newly built Pube one day, worrying himself to the brink of an anxiety attack, before Tommy's egg had rolled to the side and the smallest crack appeared in the top of it. That had been seven days after the doctors estimated he was supposed to have been born. But when Phil took him back to them after hatching—for a checkup, just to be safe—they said they must have been wrong in their estimation. Tommy was so small, they said, there was no way he hadn't been born early.

Now, watching his son stretch the wings he'd been told would never carry him, Phil decided that people did things on their own time. Some eggs hatched early and others late. Some hatchlings flew at twelve months. Some at seventeen years. Some never did, and that was okay too. Sometimes those were the ones who made the sky come to them with clunky machines and giggling friends. Who took life by the handlebars and tugged it, told it exactly what and who they were going to be, with or without the universe's help. They persisted on stubborn grit alone, and oftentimes were rewarded with even more success than those who possessed the ability naturally.

Tommy and Phil swooped upwards again as they reached Snow Mountain. The air blew frigid here, but the view of the sun rising over the sparkling snow was worth the chill.

"Crow father!" Tommy whooped, snapping Phil from his musings. "Wanna race back? Tubbo's setting up the flying machine! You could come for a ride with us on it! It's really cool I swear! And I think we've got it this time! It'll work!"

Phil chuckled. He didn't doubt that, one day, it would.

Chapter End Notes

Gosh, this fic could have ended about a million different ways. I told you it would get better though!

Thank you for reading!! Comments and kudos are always appreciated, also, follow me on [tumblr](#)! I talk a lot more writing/dsmp/osmp stuff there.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!